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Athletic Advantage in College

Problem

Many student athletes dream of playing their favorite sport when they go off to college. There are many different advantages and disadvantages of being a college athlete. Many institutions have a tendency to be lenient with college athletes but they must be held to the same standards as non-athlete students. Do student athletes get unfair advantages over non student athletes? If so what are some of the different advantages athletes receive? Throughout this paper, I am going to discuss the many different advantages that college athletes receive over non-student athletes.

Background

Attending college is not only a chance to further ones education; but an opportunity to experience lessons in life. Institutions want their students to be treated equally, however diversity is well accepted. The debate over some larger college's athletic programs versus academics can easily be broken down with facts. Athletes at colleges where athletics are a large part of the schools namesake are given unfair advantages that overshadow the purpose of the institution's existence. There is evidence that athletes do have an unfair advantage over non-athletic students. I haven't had any negative experiences with regards to special treatment to

athletes; however I wanted to see how other students both athletic and non-athletic thought about this subject matter.

Method

To answer the question if student athletes have unfair advantages over non student athletes, I decided to ask a few friends, both athletes and non-athletes, which attend some of the bigger name colleges to see what their experience with this subject matter is. I also researched this subject matter online.

Findings

Despite a tendency for institutions to be lenient with college athletes, as they enjoy the benefits of full-time-student status, they must be held to the same standards as non-athlete students. Every institution has an obligation to set attendance rules; students who attend these institutions have an obligation to abide by them, however, in actuality, professors choose whether or not they are enforced. Although institutions want their students equally treated, diversity is well accepted. Life as a college athlete contributes to diversity as well as a substantial amount of favoritism. Issues arise pertaining to how one may view an institution as well as the institution itself, due to an athlete's gift. Though athletics contribute to a decrease in anxiety and stress, in some cases, facts show otherwise. Furthermore, every institution has a set of rules pertaining to attendance policies, that every student, including athletes need to follow.

Most institutions have similar attendance policies. Their policies include: attending regular classes on time, fully comprehending the syllabus for every class, prompt notice to instructor regarding absences due to competition and/or travel, once a certain amount of days have been missed the student is dropped, and failure to properly communicate with instructor

may result in a failing grade (Worsnop). Policies have acknowledged the student-athlete is fully responsible for communicating with their professors regarding their attendance. They have also acknowledged students are not entitled to a certain number of absences. Most importantly, policies have stated the importance of in-class information and how critical it is for a student's learning process. For the general student population, when absences are excessive, students are dropped from the course. Furthermore, Community College professors are easier to work with due to smaller class size, rather than a University, where class sizes are so large, one may never meet the professor. There are various obstacles to overcome in college-athletics; ones that are mentioned are just to name a few.

Although many argue in defense of college-athletics, to elaborate on the few obstacles mentioned, one might put more detail in how stress and anxiety can be reduced simply by exercise. Exercise is great for brain functioning as well as the body. A decrease in stress may help a player to perform well on assignments, and the field. To help a player into a positive mental state, coaches have put together certain stretches that specifically target anxiety pressure points. When an athlete is in a positive mental state, he/she is able to perform well. Players are also able to control their thinking, remove tension, and conserve energy using the special techniques provided. Generally, techniques used for relaxation, should result in decreased blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and decreased body metabolism. Another benefit of college-athletics, is the substantial amount of class time one may miss, this gives an opportunity for other students to have one-on-one attention with their professor and peers. Smaller class size contributes to individual success. Other advantages of missing class include one-to-one teaching with the student-athlete and his/her professor. The player has an advantage of time with the professor so he can elaborate on questions he/she may have. In turn, this may benefit the player

to get a better understanding of the material and assignments.

Despite potential positive factors college-athletes endure, negative factors may outweigh the positive. Because players are out of class so often, it excludes him/her from in class assignments and communication with their peers. Unable to make up in class assignments can result in loss of points and prompt positive peer feedback. Ultimately, loss of points can result in failing grades as well as an indirect learning. Also, the player is not engaged in the criteria when he/she is unaccounted for. Understanding material is a key function in the learning process, that is why, it is mandatory for students to attend class. People may think there is no downside of exercise, but studies have shown the opposite. Heavy play schedules, competition for team places, fans, and the pressure to win trophies, all play a part in developing high stress and anxiety levels. This stress is called pre-match stress. According to Canadian researcher Selye as the “psycho-physiological responses of the individual to any influence which disturbs his “inner-balance,” individual players’ reaction to stress can involve aggression and anger or inversely, inhibition, regression and fear (Press). Players are more at risk of injury when stressed due to their attention levels being disorientated. Moving along, the simple fact the student-athlete isn’t abiding by the attendance policies show favoritism toward those individuals.

Favoritism toward an athlete is similar to a mom or dad favoring a specific child. Now, one can determine the consequences are substantially dangerous and crucial when dealing with favoritism. One can only imagine how favoritism could have an effect on athletes and their peers. Both are affected by favoritism in a negative way in the long run. Students may feel excluded or less confident because a player is able to miss a substantial amount of days. Additionally, a player may use his athlete status to his benefit and skip class, communicating with his/her professor he has a game or practice. Favoritism can affect a students’ performance

as well as their wellbeing (Taylor). Hatred and an unhealthy mental process also contribute to favoritism. Also, time is taken away from the professor and the athlete when assignments are missed. Time that a professor has to use to re-explain work missed is also taking time away from another student that may have questions also, but has been present more so than the student-athlete; a situation like that can't be fair. All students should be treated equally. Lastly, when an athlete is forced to receive assignments early, it forces the player to crunch their time between performance and assignment. Depending on the mind-set of a player, he/she might find it more important to perform well athletically, rather than educationally. Furthermore, time forces a player to decide what may be less important to him/her.

Other issues pertaining to favoritism toward college athletes exist mainly within faculty. Boyce Watkins, a college professor, explained how he once came across an athlete who could only read at the fourth grade level. Faculty became suspicious, so the player was investigated on academic misconduct because he turned in a paper that seemed to be written by someone other than the player. In taking actions against the player, the disciplinary committee, which was made up of three students and four professors, had to decide if the player was guilty after reviewing the evidence. All students who found the player guilty of cheating were out voted by the faculty, and the player did not suffer any consequences (Capriccioso). Another situation of academic misconduct is professors allowing players to accumulate course credits with the work not being completed. Faculties seem to care a great deal about a player and his/her success on the court and field, rather than the classroom. Academic advisors also contribute to favoritism by selecting curriculum that seems to be easy and/or have lenient professors. There is an overabundance of pressure on players, academic advisors, and faculty to make sure athletes succeed and/or progress toward a degree. Manipulating grades comes easy to professors who care deeply about

the success of their institution. Ironically, faculty is often the largest vocal critic of favoritism. Standards are crucial in helping student athletes, and if faculty and academic advisors are lowering the standards for athletes, he/she may not reach his/her full potential. The player is only letting down his/her self. Situations and issues dealing with favoritism, not only affect the institution or player, but everyone. Ideas of favoritism can harm the inner morals one may have. When other athletes are present when favoritism is taking place, or hear about it, he/she may follow in the same steps; demonstrating a train reaction. Investigations have taken place, but when professors are confronted, him/her explanation are the player has been taking “special courses” and/or made assignments up in a timely manner. Investigation ends once an explanation is given. Furthermore, not a whole lot has been done concerning favoring athletes.

While speaking with some of my friends on both sides of this situation I really didn't get any negative remarks. Both felt that sure a football player might get more attention from everyone but when it comes down to it everyone needs to follow the same guidelines given by the school.

Conclusion

While doing my research, I feel that student-athletes must be held to the same standards as full-time students, as they enjoy the benefits of college life; tendencies of lenience from professors can impact everyone. Favoritism is a significant factor in athletics which needs to be addressed with preliminary action. Institutions are supposed to treat every student equally. As Americans, we have an obligation to abide by the laws of the constitution, and every institution should also have an obligation to enforce equality among student-athletes and regular full-students.

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